THEOSOPHY

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The birth and evolution of the Sacred Science of the Past are lost in the very night of Time; and that, even, which is historic. It is, then, by those shadows of the hoary Past and their fantastic silhouettes on the external screen of every religion and philosophy, that we can, by checking them as we go along, and comparing them, trace out finally the body that produced them. There must be truth and fact in that which every people of antiquity accepted and made the foundation of its religions and its faith.

—H. P. BLAVATSKY

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THE THEOSOPHY COMPANY

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II *The study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and*

III *The investigation of the unexplained laws of Nature and the psychical powers latent in man.*

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He (the sage) necessarily becomes that on which his mind is fixed: This is the eternal mystery.

—*Anugita*

THEOSOPHY

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KARMIC CYCLES

A NATURAL difficulty of the present is the pessimism which has overtaken many observers of the course of human affairs. The grounds for reasoned hope seem shallow indeed, given the warnings of thoughtful ecologists and other scientists, and considering the caustic comment of critics who follow closely the decisions of authoritative bodies and various national leaders. Students of Theosophy, while they have a philosophic basis for optimism of a sort, and the encouragements given by H.P.B. in the closing pages of *The Key to Theosophy* (and in articles such as "The Fall of Ideals" and "The Tidal Wave"), are bound to be somewhat affected by the gloom of the time, although working hard as they do, a counter feeling of hope may provide support.

There is also, for students, an equanimity to be gained from the perspective afforded by occult history. The devastations of the wars of the twentieth century, while horrible to contemplate, were not the first time in history that great civilizations have been reduced, or even erased. What in present terms is thought of as extreme or total disaster has visited the planet again and again, the destruction of Atlantis being only the most familiar example. While such overtakings of Karma are not pleasant to contemplate, nor can the concomitant suffering be discounted, still, the firm conviction that the souls which shaped the last civilization will go on to other brave attempts, bringing to birth better and higher forms of social life, helps to relieve the desperation that manifest downward tendencies inspire.

Still, anxieties may come. Considerable hardihood of mind is required of those able to read the daily newspapers without feeling depressed. And so, from time to time, the question arises: Why is not the human race further along? Theosophy as we know it has been in the world for a full century, and while some of its terms are becoming well known, its teachings no longer strange, it is difficult to recognize what might be regarded as actual moral progress in the affairs of men. It is true that several encouraging efforts for reform have champions and advocates who speak clearly and seem to be heard. Yet these movements are fragile affairs compared to the power exercised by established institutions, beliefs, and ideas. Are we really getting anywhere in our attempt to affect the hearts of men?

A definite answer to this question would risk presumption. As Mr. Judge remarked after five years of editing the *Path*: "In the course of a few centuries and in other lives, it will be possible to find out just what influence the PATH has exerted. Just now we must content ourselves with offering thanks to those who with pen or money have assisted this most obscure journal." To this may be added the fact that we know little of the natural *rate* of human progress, if such there be, or, indeed, where to look for its most significant signs amid the darkness of Kali Yuga. If, as H.P.B. remarks in "The Fall of Ideals," changes for the better may be wrought by swift-acting forces—such as wars, epidemics and famines—it would seem well to follow Mr. Judge's advice and rest content with the *general* idea of progress as given in the philosophy.

Yet what we are told about human development may be richer in implication, if not specification, than we have realized. The teaching is that—

> . . . for the first three and a half Root-Races, up to the middle or turning point, it is the astral shadows of the "progenitors," the lunar Pitris, which are the formative powers in the Races, and which build and gradually force the evolution of the physical form towards perfection—this, at the cost of a proportionate loss of spirituality. Then, from the turning point, it is the Higher Ego, or incarnating principle, the *nous* or *Mind,* which reigns over the animal Ego, and rules it whenever it is not carried down by the latter. In short, Spirituality is on its ascending arc, and the animal or physical impedes it from steadily progressing on the path of its evolution only when the

selfishness of the *personality* has so strongly infected the real *inner* man with its lethal *virus*, that the upward attraction has lost all its power on the thinking reasonable man. (*The Secret Doctrine* II, 110.)

Elsewhere H.P.B. gives and interprets a passage from the occult Commentary:

> "*We* (the Fifth Root-Race) *in our first half* (of duration) *onward* (on the now ASCENDING arc of the cycle) *are on the midpoint of* (or between) *the First and the Second Races—falling downward* (*i.e.*, the races were then on the descending arc of the cycle). . . . *Calculate for thyself*, Lanoo, *and see.*"
>
> Calculating as advised, we find that during that transitional period—namely, in the second half of the First Spiritual etheroastral race—nascent mankind was devoid of the intellectual brain element. As it was on its *descending* line, and as we are parallel to it, on the *ascending*, we are, therefore, devoid of the Spiritual element, which is now replaced by the intellectual. For, remember well, as we are in the *manasa* period of our cycle of races, or in the Fifth, we have, therefore, crossed the meridian point of the perfect adjustment of Spirit and Matter—or that equilibrium between brain intellect and Spiritual perception. One important point has, however, to be borne in mind.
>
> We are only in the Fourth Round, and it is in the Fifth that the full development of *Manas*, as a direct ray from the Universal MAHAT—a ray unimpeded by matter—will be finally reached. Nevertheless, as every sub-race and nation have their cycles and stages of developmental evolution repeated on a smaller scale, it must be the more so in the case of a Root-Race. Our race then has, as a Root-race, crossed the equatorial line and is cycling onward on the Spiritual side; but some of our sub-races still find themselves on the shadowy descending arc of their respective national cycles; while others again—the oldest—having crossed their crucial point, which alone decides whether a race, a nation, or a tribe will live or perish, are at the apex of spiritual development as sub-races. (*S.D.* II, 300-301.)

It is well to consider here the selective character of the smaller cycles, which have, H.P.B. says, a certain independence of each other. There are, she says, "great Racial Cycles which affect equally all the nations and tribes included in that special Race; but there are minor and national as well as tribal cycles within those, which run independently of each other." (*S.D.* I, 642.) The latter she identifies as "Karmic cycles," the effects of which are not even dreamed of by Western thinkers. In the present it would be difficult indeed to distinguish among these cycles with any particular-

ity, since the pall of Kali Yuga seems now to cover all the world. Moreover, the periods of time involved in even the development and fruition of family races are much longer than the full term of what is known as our historical period, which reaches back only a few thousand years.

The occult perspective is far more inclusive. Speaking of the three sidereal years represented by the Dendera Zodiac—a total of 78,000 years—H.P.B. says:

> . . . the three Zodiacs belong to three different epochs: namely, to the last three family races of the fourth Sub-race of the Fifth Root-race, each of which must have lived approximately from 25 to 30,000 years. The first of these (the "Aryan-Asiatics") witnessed the doom of the last of the populations of the "giant Atlanteans" who perished some 850,000 years ago (the Ruta and Daitya Island-Continents) toward the close of the Miocene Age. The fourth sub-race witnessed the destruction of the last remnants of the Atlanteans—the Aryo-Atlanteans in the last island of Atlantis, namely, some 11,000 years ago. . . .
>
> Now our Fifth Root-Race has already been in existence—as a race *sui generis* and quite free from its parent stem—about 1,000,000 years; therefore it must be inferred that each of the four preceding Sub-Races has lived approximately 210,000 years; thus each Family-Race has an average existence of about 30,000 years. Thus the European "Family Race" has still a good many thousand years to run, although the nations . . . vary with each succeeding "season" of three or four thousand years. It is somewhat curious to mark the comparative approximation of duration between the lives of a "Family-Race" and a "Sidereal year." (*S.D.* II, 433, 435.)
>
> Humanity is the child of cyclic Destiny, and not one of its Units can escape its unconscious mission, or get rid of the burden of its co-operative work with nature. Thus will mankind, race after race, perform its appointed cycle-pilgrimage. Climates will, and have already begun, to change, each tropical year after the other dropping one sub-race, but only to beget another higher race on the ascending cycle; while a series of other less favoured groups—the failures of nature—will, like some individual men, vanish from the human family without even leaving a trace behind. (II, 446.)

What of the existing races and nations? H.P.B. speaks of geologic disasters destined to come in certain areas, thousands of years hence, and in her Introductory refers to other changes as being comparatively close, when "not a few accounts will be settled and squared between the races." Such settlements seem already upon us.

As for the future, she says:

> Now, Occult philosophy teaches that even now, under our very eyes, the new Race and Races are preparing to be formed, and that it is in America that the transformation will take place, and has already silently commenced.
>
> Thus the Americans have become in only three centuries a "primary race," *pro tem.*, before becoming a race apart, and strongly separated from all other now existing races. They are, in short, the germs of the *Sixth* sub-race, and in some few hundred years more, will become most decidedly the pioneers of that race which must succeed to the present European or fifth sub-race, in all its new characteristics. After this, in about 25,000 years, they will launch into preparations for the seventh sub-race; until, in consequence of cataclysms—the first series of those which must one day destroy Europe, and still later the whole Aryan race (and thus affect both Americas), as also most of the lands directly connected with the confines of our continent and isles—the Sixth Root-Race will have appeared on the stage of our Round. When shall this be? Who knows save the great Masters of Wisdom, perchance, and they are as silent upon the subject as the snow-capped peaks that tower above them. (*S.D.* II, 444-45.)

In her article, "The Fall of Ideals," H.P.B. points out that the men of our world and time are almost incapable of grasping the part played by cyclic change in human affairs. From age to age mankind rises and sinks, and, she says, "his moral nature responsively expands or contracts," at one time having a moral code which embodies "the noblest altruistic and aspirational ideals," while at another "the ruling conscience will be but the reflection of selfishness, brutality and faithlessness." Yet beneath these extreme oscillations, there is an inner movement toward the goal. In the present dark period we have H.P.B.'s assurance:

> Hitherto, it was remarked in almost every historical age that a wide interval, almost a chasm, lay between practical and ideal perfection. Yet, as from time to time certain great characters appeared on earth who taught mankind to look beyond the veil of illusion, man learnt that the gulf was not an impassable one: that it is the province of mankind through its higher and more spiritual races to fill the great gap more and more with every coming cycle; for every man, as a unit, has it in his power to add his mite toward filling it. Yes; there are still men, who, notwithstanding the present chaotic condition of the moral world, and the sorry *debris* of the best human ideals, still persist in believing and teaching that the now *ideal* human

perfection is no dream, but a law of divine nature; and that, had Mankind to wait even millions of years, still it must some day reach it and rebecome a *race of gods*.

Are we able to determine anything about the Karmic cycle which now affects the modern world? A paragraph in *Isis Unveiled* seems most informing concerning a cycle which may now be coming to a noticeable end. She wrote in 1877:

> *We are at the bottom of a cycle and evidently in a transistory state*. Plato divides the intellectual progress of the universe during every cycle into fertile and barren periods. In the sublunary regions, the spheres of the various elements remain eternally in perfect harmony with the divine nature, he says; "but their parts," owing to a too close proximity to earth, and their commingling with the *earthly* (which is matter, and therefore the realm of evil), "are sometimes according, and sometimes contrary to (divine) nature." When those circulations—which Éliphas Lévi calls "currents of astral light"—in the universal ether which contains in itself every element, take place in harmony with the divine spirit, our earth and everything pertaining to it enjoys a fertile period. The occult powers of plants, animals, and minerals magically sympathize with the "superior natures," and the divine soul of man is in perfect intelligence with these "inferior" ones. But during barren periods, the latter lose their magic sympathy, and the spiritual sight of the majority of mankind is so blinded as to lose every notion of the superior powers of its own divine spirit. We are in a barren period: the eighteenth century, during which the malignant fever of scepticism broke out so irrepressibly, has entailed unbelief as an hereditary disease upon the nineteenth. The divine intellect is veiled in man; his animal brain alone *philosophizes*. (I, 247.)

What reason have we to think that this cycle is reaching its end? The sense of feeling of great change, H.P.B. remarks in "The Esoteric Character of the Gospels," is masked in the popular mind by vulgar conceptions, yet the reality is known to occultists. She wrote in 1887:

> Millenarians and Adventists of robust faith, may go on saying that "the coming of (the carnalised) Christ" is near at hand, and prepare themselves for "the end of the world." Theosophists—at any rate, some of them—who understand the hidden meaning of the universally-expected Avatars, Messiahs, Sosioshes, and Christs—know that it is no "end of the world," but "the consummation of the age," *i.e.*, the close of a cycle, which is now fast approaching.
>
> There are several remarkable cycles that come to a close at the end of this century. First, the 5,000 years of the Kaliyug

> cycle; again the Messianic cycle of the Samaritan (also Kabalistic) Jews of the man connected with *Pisces* (Ichthys or "Fishman" *Dag*). It is a cycle, historic and not very long, but very occult, lasting about 2,155 solar years, but having a true significance only when computed by lunar months. It occurred 2410 and 255 B.C., or when the equinox entered into the sign of the *Ram,* and again into that of *Pisces*. When it enters, in a few years, the sign of *Aquarius,* psychologists will have some extra work to do, and the psychic idiosyncrasies of humanity will enter on a great change.

Later in this article H.P.B. made a hardly obscure prediction concerning what we may think of as our "present":

> But if the voice of the MYSTERIES has become silent for many ages in the West, if Eleusis, Memphis, Antium, Delphi, and Crèsa have long ago been made the tombs of a Science once as colossal in the West as it is yet in the East, there are successors now being prepared for them. We are in 1887 and the nineteenth century is close to its death. The twentieth century has strange developments in store for humanity, and may even be the last of its name.

H.P.B. was under no illusion concerning the acceptability of what she revealed as the teachings of the Wisdom-Religion in *The Secret Doctrine*. They would, she said in the Introductory, be derided and rejected *a priori* in her time. But a change would come, she also said, in the twentieth century. Elsewhere she explained:

> Nor, is it after all, necessary that anyone should believe in the occult Sciences and the old teachings, before one knows anything or even believes in his own soul. No great truth was ever accepted *a priori*, and generally a century or two passed before it began to glimmer in the human consciousness as a possible verity, except in such cases as the positive discovery of the thing claimed as a fact. The truths of to-day are the falsehoods and errors of yesterday, and *vice versa*. It is only in the XXth century that portions, if not the whole, of the present work will be vindicated. (II, 441-42.)

It would be well to remember, while reflecting on the import of such statements regarding periods of human development, that the cycles overlap, and that each cycle gains its characterization from the main thrust of the evolutionary impulse. What is true of great cycles applies in appropriate measure to smaller ones also. "The Fifth will overlap the Sixth Race for many hundreds of milleniums, changing with it slower than its new successor, still changing in stature, general physique, and mentality, just as the Fourth overlapped our Aryan race, and the Third had overlapped the Atlanteans."

THE POINT OF EGOITY

FOR every man there comes the time when he must stand entirely alone—when he can do nothing but apply the counsel of *Light on the Path*—"Hold fast to that which has neither substance nor existence." From the outlook of personal life, this is indeed a paradox—the soul finds itself severed from all objective relationships at a moment of supreme trial. Yet it is entirely reasonable that, in order to join in the universal fraternity of spirit, the soul has need of letting loose from every alliance of a material nature. It is, so to say, an irrefutable affirmation of the spiritual nature to find balance and security in "that which has neither substance nor existence."

There are endless trials of a preparatory and inferior character to acquaint the nascent spiritual ego with the nature of this ultimate decision. Every day a man must choose between self-reliance and dependence on some external authority. Every day he is called upon to distinguish between the *principle* of individual choice and the psychic habit of accepting a direction given by others.

The religious heritage of the West has the influence of obscuring when not altogether concealing the importance of these alternatives. Against the idea of spiritual egoity and self-reliance, traditional Christianity sets the notion of a supernatural "Saviour," a unique being whose ordeal on the cross is offered as a substitute for the trial of individual initiation. The man who accepts that substitute abrogates his own egoity. For long centuries, the West suffered intense indoctrination in the advantages of this substitution. Every device of fear and promise of reward was employed to alienate human beings from the idea of their own potential divinity. There was endless persecution of the unbeliever in this world, and promise of eternal punishment for him in the next.

One could have no greater testament to the reality of the spiritual ego in man than the fact that, in spite of these many persuasions, there were enough hardy, self-reliant souls in the West to throw off the psychic and moral degradations of a millenium and

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NOTE:—This article is reprinted from THEOSOPHY, Vol. 42.

to declare the independence of the human individual. This great resistance movement has since been identified, in its effects, as modern Materialism, but its genesis, like the genesis of true religion, was in the demand of the ego for recognition of its dignity and freedom. Then, in the nineteenth century, when the tide of positive inspiration in the scientific revolution was receding, soon to flow back into the swamps and stagnant pools of another kind of derogation of the human spirit—the identification of man with the animals, and all that goes with this soul-denying conception—the Founder of the Theosophical Movement entered the arena of modern thought. Now another and more far-reaching attempt was to be made to establish the reality of the spiritual nature of man. While the protagonists of both science and religion continued to squabble over the partisan issues which had developed during their long contest, H. P. Blavatsky sounded a new note of challenge. You fight, she said in effect, in an old battle which has lost its significance. The war between science and religion has become, she announced, merely a war of orthodoxies, the new against the old. With the help of a few others who caught a glimmer of what she meant, she established the Theosophical Society as the means to communicate with the Western world, although she knew, better than anyone else, the danger that even Theosophy, for all its knowledge of the nature of man and his spiritual self-existence, would fall into the hands of makers of Theosophical orthodoxy, developing its own conscious and unconscious betrayers of the message of spiritual freedom.

But, like the Founders of the American Republic, she sought to show Theosophists how to bring into being a *self-reforming* and *self-regenerating* institution. She saw that unless theosophists themselves could learn to distinguish between "membership" in the Society and the process of self-discovery which the Society was formed to aid, the Theosophical Movement would soon relapse into another conventional form of religious belief, all the more insidious because of the flavor of "occultism" which would long linger in all nominal Theosophical associations.

The problem was to disclose both the relationship and the difference between cultural reform and individual progress in self-discovery. All that a teacher can do is establish the educational force of a cultural reform. But if the effort stops there, with the contribution of the teacher, the age-old tendency to accept a *sub-*

stitution for self-reliance sets in, and pursues its crystallizing and secularizing course even while echoing the sentiments of spiritual self-discovery.

There is, however, another aspect of the problem as stated. The course of egoic evolution begins at the psychic level and ends at the spiritual level. The process involves a kind of "weaning" of the disciple from his initial relationship of dependence upon a teacher. This growth into self-reliance can not be hastened, nor should it be delayed. It must, like every other growth-process in nature, proceed at its own pace; and since, in this case, the development relates to the assertion of the will of the individual rather than to the external laws of nature, the formation of the matrix for this growth requires profound and intimate knowledge of the cycles of human evolution.

The disciple has to in a sense emancipate himself from his teacher in order to join that teacher as a colleague. Yet this hardly puts the matter correctly, for the emancipation is not from the teacher himself, but rather from the inner sense of psychic dependence felt by the disciple in respect to the teacher. So stated, the equation is a fairly simple one. But against the background of the cultural environment and history, the role of other factors must be considered. The disciple is at the same time confronted by superficially similar psychic relationships which prevail between orthodox believers and the priests of religion. He is now obliged to distinguish again, this time between a natural psychic relationship and an unnatural and atavistic one. The criterion of decision has to be evolved by the disciple himself: he must himself be able to recognize that a natural psychic relationship, for human beings, is a relationship which continually grows less binding in terms of psychic dependence, and is progressively tranformed into an alliance of manasic and spiritual beings. It is notable that, in this cycle of the Theosophical Movement, the "teachers" have only an *impersonal identity*—a fact of marked significance in relation to the question of where the present generations of egos stand on the ladder of psycho-spiritual evolution. The implication is that they have reached a point where the matrix of initiation need not be "personal," but can be generalized as an environment of Higher Nature. It is also suggestive with respect to the educational wisdom of the Teachers of Theosophy.

Here, conceivably, we arrive at a working definition of the limit of help that can be obtained from the cultural reform established by teachers, by beings wiser and more advanced than ourselves. The remaining crucial steps of progress have to be taken by the disciples. The need is now for understanding of the true process of self-discovery. The work to be done, as always, involves the awakening of the intuition and the development of self-reliance. Part of the task brings an eternal watchfulness of the natural "gravitation" of the inner man. Is there an inclination to rely on "authority"? To feel very much "alone" when explanations we think necessary and in order are not forthcoming?

To what extent, in our reflections, does the course of our lives seem to depend upon what others may do? Do we turn to others for light, or for comfort and assurance in moments of desperation? Is our courage borrowed from the indomitable strength, or what we think to be the indomitable strength, of others?

Or, to turn the situation about, does the liberation we seek seem to depend upon severing some tie of now regretted personal dependence? Are we "proud" of our new-born independence—a self-reliance which recoils from even the counsel and mutual regard which once seemed so important to us—too important, perhaps?

In either case, the psychology is personal in origin, the decisive forces psychic, not spiritual or egoic.

It is hard, sometimes, to realize, that when emotions of this sort hold sway, we are indeed at the place where we must learn to hold fast to that which has neither substance nor existence. It is then that no one can help us, when the soul must speak in the soul's authentic accents, or we shall fail and fall back to some lower level of psychic security, and have to start the slow climb to egoity once again. Such decisions come to us, not once or twice, but again and again, until, at last, a crucial moment of choice presents itself.

"THE GITA"—INFORMAL ESSAYS

V

ONE of the most interesting paradoxes of the third chapter of the *Gita* is also the supreme moral and psychological paradox of all philosophy or psychology. Toward the end of the discourse we find Arjuna expressing a grave concern for the fact that man is often "propelled to commit offences, seemingly against his will and as if constrained by some secret force." Krishna informs Arjuna that it is "lust which instigates him. It is passion, sprung from the quality of *rajas;* insatiable, and full of sin." And then Krishna presumably supplies the remedy. "Therefore, O best of the descendants of Bharata, at the very outset restraining thy senses, thou shouldst conquer this sin. . . . " This seems simple and clear enough, and is a familiar theme of all moral counsels. Krishna is telling Arjuna to fight against those influences which spring from nature.

Yet, but a page previous, Krishna has told Arjuna that the "wise man also seeketh for that which is homogeneous with his own nature. All creatures act according to their natures; what, then, will restraint effect?" Obviously there are two kinds of restraint, or, rather, two meanings of the word. When Krishna unequivocally states that restraint will be unavailing, he is disparaging *repression,* since repression can be advocated only by a man whose philosophy holds forth no hope of turning the forces presently at work "for evil" into forces that can move towards righteousness. The ecclesiastics of the Middle Ages were not the first to make an imposing dogma of a presumed need for "repression" of evil. The flagellant-ascetics encountered by Buddha, and with whom he remonstrated, represented another form of the same belief—that one must escape even the *proximity* of the world of the senses, and that the only relationships possible between man and the sensory world are either submission or escape.

It is small wonder that leading psychologists of the twentieth century have developed a persevering antipathy to the doctrines of soul, for "soul" is still widely interpreted as "that *pure* part of us which must learn to leave the present world, in toto, behind."

NOTE:—This is the fifth of a series of articles which were originally printed in THEOSOPHY, Vols. 38 and 39.

Whatever the psychologists' failings, they are possessed of a true conviction when they assert that happiness and maturity for a "soul" (if there be one), are logically impossible unless it has learned to come to terms—intelligently and sympathetically—with the world in which it presently lives. Hence that portion of the average psychologist's philosophy which is "theosophical": the recognition that nothing and no situation may be regarded as entirely evil, but that in the sphere of morality we deal rather with relative enlightenment and unenlightenment. Some of the work of the psychologists is therefore akin to the labors of Socrates in his unsettlement of conventional morality, which, in ancient Athens as in all other times, had perniciously established rigid categories of "goodness" and "badness."

The second meaning of "restraint" is closer to, though not identical with, the psychologists' definition of "sublimation." The worth of the sublimation concept is in its implicit avowal of the necessity for individual moral choices through which man may gradually improve his physical and psychical impulses. The Inner War, on this view, is to be waged against one's own faulty attitudes of mind, not against *personifications of evil* represented by either individuals, rival religious groups, or rival nations. We may conclude that when Krishna tells Arjuna to fight against "lust," he is not talking about fighting against the "qualities of nature," but about refusing to let the energy of consciousness be dissipated in nonpurposeful motions; that is, actions generated by the turbulence of the confused lower self.

One of the subtle signs of genuine Theosophical moral counsel is that it encourages men to enter—mentally and with deep sympathy—into the problems of the world. The "secret doctrine" of Theosophy, for instance, as contained in what are called the devotional books, implies a higher goal than that of the Dharmakaya. "Dharmakaya" is the Sanskrit term for the man who first wins the right to choose release from the troublesome associations of earth life—and then so chooses. It is the Nirmanakaya, not the Dharmakaya, who represents the Theosophical Mahatma—the man who perceives a deeper meaning in identification with *all selves* than in separation from "unworthy" selves. Therefore, we find Krishna explaining to Arjuna that "all classes of men" may "involuntarily worship" the Self *if* their devotion includes the welfare of others. This must have been calculated to help Arjuna see that he must

not seek superiority over others, but must instead learn to penetrate the illusory distinctions which separate the greatest man from his humblest counterpart in the lower ranks of society. The opening of the *Gita* discovers Arjuna ready to renounce all connection with a battlefield which, we may say, is peopled by men less intelligent than himself, and when Krishna tells him that the very principles of his nature will impel him to engage, the Teacher asserts a fundamental tenet of Theosophical evolutionary doctrine—that there is no real separation from any form of intelligence in the universe. Krishna's appearance as a battle companion, moreover, may be taken as a reminder that one is not likely to find such a being as Krishna ready to assist if one has sought only the company of the elect and shunned the battle; that is, disregarded obligations to those less enlightened who can be helped forward.

The student infers that an aspirant to the company and counsel of a Great Teacher must seize firmly the opportunities of his own karmic situation before any help from "on high" can be expected. The seeking of Great Teachers and leaders, if not preceded by this resolve, results only in blind selfish worship of some source of power which one hopes will partisanly mediate between himself and his karma. According to the presentation of Buddha's teaching in the *Dhammapada,* also, this line of reasoning is held to be the best sort of sensible advice. Buddha instructs his disciple to ascertain wherein his own good lies, and not to deviate from it for the "good, however great, of another." Yet these admonitions might be to ensure *preparation* for seeking the company of the wise, rather than to recommend merely solitary endeavor. The *Dhammapada* also has this to say:

> It is right to serve a wise and intelligent man, one who shows where treasures lie hid; one who reveals the shortcomings in others. . . . Even the gods aspire towards those who are enlightened and mindful, who are wise and devoted in meditation. Therefore (let a man follow) the steadfast, the wise, the learned, one preeminent in character (Arhat), the fulfiller of vows and the noble man.

This would seem to indicate, in turn, that when one fully accepts the interpenetration of his life and destiny with that of humanity in general, he then needs to seek the most intelligent companionship. This is because help to the innumerable human beings who possess but a spark of mind can often come best through examples of sustained, fitting relationships among more responsible individ-

uals. Seldom, for example, can a Great Teacher benefit others by direct personal involvement, since the ties natural to a perfected man might throw too great a strain upon the capacities of a "younger" and more distracted soul.

We have, then, to accept in both heart and mind our relationship to the heterogeneous world; we yet must *seek*, too, for what, under our present karma, is *homogeneous* to our natures and within our "natural" orbit. This raises a new complexity, which cannot be fully solved by saying that we must attach ourselves to that which is homogeneous to our "higher nature" and struggle against all that our "lower nature" represents. In the context of any conception of universal soul evolution, we can only conclude that the man who avoids association with those whom he considers less than his equals will not come to terms with that "general" lower nature of all mankind, which—in himself as in others—so needs alteration and improvement. The answer must be that the wise man, seeking further wisdom through association with either "equals" or "superiors," will also be ready to "associate" with those who seem presently "less" than his "equals"—whenever called by karmic request, spoken or unspoken. These are distinctions which the aristocracy of earth has habitually failed to make. The abstract question is further complicated by the fact that association with those who are "not our equals" is often because of a desire to escape from the moral responsibilities of our fullest maturity, through the pretense of belonging to a sphere of lesser responsibility where acts and pleasures uncongenial to a life of higher perception can be indulged.

Achieving *synthesis* between ourselves and all classes of men and experience would seem the goal for any philosophy intending to encourage Universality. Yet this must be "with wisdom and discretion"—and by karmic need—accomplished.

Several passages in Chapter Five serve as interesting illustrations of the way in which the teachings of Krishna throughout the *Gita* yield an esoteric significance often at variance with their apparent, exoteric connotation. For thousands of years, men have discovered, by reflection on the psychological structure of the *Gita,* that what appears to be said is different from what is really meant. And this is often less due to any deliberately "mystical" construction than to the special meanings men have come to associate with familiar words and phrases. Do not all of us tend, at first inspection, to

translate everything in terms of the symbols and associations peculiar to our own conditioning?

A chapter entitled "Devotion by Means of Renunciation of Action" certainly seems to imply the desirability of the soul's separating itself from the world of the senses. In the concluding portion, for instance, Krishna states that "enjoyments which arise through contact of the senses with external objects are wombs of pain, since they have a beginning and an end." Further, "monasticism" is apparently recommended when Krishna praises the wisdom of the sage who "doth not rejoice at obtaining what is pleasant, nor grieve when meeting what is unpleasant." But here we must remember, again, that one of the distingushing characteristics of Krishna's teaching is the absence of moralistic preachments. While we, by cultural habit, identify strivings to find release from a "tyranny of the senses" with our worry about the problem of good and evil, Krishna's terms may not fit ours—he is not speaking a moralistic language. The terms used in Chapter Five, for example, might well be subjected to *literal* scrutiny—not assumed to be familiar generalities on "morality." Consider the sentence already quoted: What Krishna has actually said implies only that enjoyments which *arise* through the contact of the senses with external objects "are wombs of pain." This does not mean that the senses are to be *destroyed*, nor that enjoyment flowing through the appropriate sensory channels is unreal or to be shunned. But *one* species of enjoyment "arises" from the contact of the senses with external objects, even though, in this day of evolution, the species is overcrowded. A course of action *may* be initiated by a higher aspiration of the inner man, and the impulsion of an assimilated idealism can produce enjoyments which are not "wombs of pain." Krishna is saying, then, that all enjoyment is illusory unless originating in Buddhi-Manas, and thus having a thread of meaning or purpose which enables the experience to live, transformed, in a world of ever higher and wider meanings.

The aspirant to occult wisdom is required to recognize that pain and pleasure are never more than emotional states, and that all experience of a psychic or emotional nature must be translated into terms of purpose. It is, however, only those possessed of "the subtle sight" who are able to discern that all the foregoing is implicit when Krishna asserts that the "Sankhya and the Yoga" doctrines are identical. The goal is freedom from delusion—not cessation of

life—to be obtained by living *in this world*, while holding a state of equal-mindedness towards experience; experience, whether pleasant or unpleasant, is of itself always something less than meaning or purpose. The "Lord within" creates purpose when he marshals the strength of his highest powers, and the man who "can resist the impulsion arising from desire and anger" uses the vital energies of his nature as fuel, not for the "lower" or less significant "fires," but for greater and brighter ones.

When Krishna speaks of the illuminated sage seeing all creatures as alike in their imperishable natures, he means that such a wise one entirely dispenses with classifications of good and evil. He sees, in *all*, the Indwelling Spirit—and, perhaps, translated into the terms of intercourse between beings, he perceives wherein the evolutionary "good" of all persons and ideas resides. And because everything must represent one of two conditions—either growing or retarded intelligence—with the dividing line constantly shifting according to the aspirations of each individual being, he makes *no* moral pronouncements.

"The truth is obscured by that which is not true, and therefore all creatures are led astray." When ignorance is dispersed, the devotee lives in an expanded universe; his "asylum" becomes ever more the self of all. He is not isolated, however—rather, he can identify himself in understanding with anything or anyone. In setting out on this path it is most necessary for the devotee to recognize that the things men call "good" are *not* good, *in themselves*, and that the things men call "evil" are not evil *in themselves*; that he who sees good where there is no good, and he who sees evil where there is no evil, are both alike deceived, for the Supreme Spirit resides in neither of these appearances. And the Lord within, the center of spiritual perception, knows that there are evolutionary meanings and purposes which are not "brief and changeable" in the manifested world.

For those who find it most natural to follow the path of religiously-ordained strictures in attaining discipline, the meaning of the *Gita's* Chapter Five can be the obvious one. But for those who pursue studies still further—who are perhaps candidates for the goal of "high indifference to those doctrines which are taught or yet to be taught," another meaning emerges—one at variance with all the foreshortened views holding the *absolute* aim of life to be in "renunciation." We are to renounce, indeed, the inadequate and

unworthy objectives of our action. Yet this is for attaining the vision which brings us close to all who live. "Assimilation with the Supreme Spirit is on *both sides of death* for those of thoughts restrained; and who are acquainted with the 'true self.'" [Italics ours.]

There is another way, also, by which we can approach a study of "Renunciation." In the writing of H. P. Blavatsky and of Mr. Judge we sometimes encounter statements to the effect that suffering has great value as a teacher. But if the Theosophical aim were simply to escape the turbulence of an unsettling physical world, such statements would never occur. Instead, we might logically expect to find advice akin to that supplied by Mary Baker Eddy to her disciples: refuse to admit suffering, and when you no longer worry yourselves over the things men *call* suffering, you will have escaped. What H.P.B. and W.Q.J. say, in effect, is: "Think and ponder over that which upsets or nearly crushes you. The worst catastrophe can be a gateway to that variety of wisdom which will finally encourage intelligent action."

Some extremely interesting discussion invariably accompanies the statement that "Theosophy is the philosophy of those who suffer," or that, as H.P.B. writes in the *Key to Theosophy*, "it is only through the latter [suffering] that we can learn. Joys and pleasures teach us nothing; they are evanescent, and can only bring in the long run satiety." Much depends upon the interpretation of such statements, for it is clear that Theosophy may not legitimately be identified with the worship of pain and suffering *per se*. In *The Bhagavad-Gita* Krishna discourses on the necessity for transcending all the opposites, including those of pleasure and pain. Certainly the fundamentals of Theosophic philosophy make it impossible to give priority and premium value to any emotional state. Suffering and happiness must be considered as *equal*, in any abstract, ultimate sense.

It is apparent that H.P.B. is speaking of those joys and pleasures unduly relished as such and made ends in themselves, for this is the implication of a context incorporating the word "satiety." Yet enjoyment of life in its broadest sense could mean nothing more than a full appreciation of its inexhaustible opportunities. H.P.B. herself, despite her physical difficulties and those tribulations associated with her betrayal by fellow theosophists, was certainly one who appreciated rather than bemoaned the striking ele-

ments of any situation she encountered. Nor is the picture we get of Buddha, Krishna, or Christ one of men preoccupied with "suffering." It would truly be more accurate to say that they were happy men. Perhaps the distinction is that they were never made "happy" by any one particular *thing*, but rather lived in the harmony of a sense of proportion—which is something different from being devoted to the attainment of "joys and pleasures."

There are no ultimate, philosophical reasons for placing a premium on "suffering," any more than on "renunciation." Only, in this particular stage of evolution, it is next to impossible for men to learn as much from a transition through intense enjoyment as from a transition through intense suffering. We need very little prompting to discover a way to leave some particular sort of suffering behind—but nothing save the philosophy of a Buddha is sufficient to pry us loose from any familiar "enjoyment." If we could leave suffering and enjoyment the moment these states achieved their purposes, never lingering, but always pressing on, we would then, and only then, perhaps, be "men of mind complete."

"There is an inmost center in us all,
Where truth abides in fulness; and around
Wall upon wall, the gross flesh hems it in . . .
And 'to know' rather consists in opening out a way
Whence the imprisoned splendour may escape,
Than in effecting entry for a light supposed to be without."

—ROBERT BROWNING'S *Paracelsus*

letters • questions • comment

A Comment: One who attends Theosophical meetings is likely to hear the phrases "materialistic science" and "dogmatic religion" quite frequently, and they appear in current Theosophical writing enough to warrant some consideration. In these days, when the conception of science is subject to debate, and religion seems in the throes of transition, the repetition of these expressions may prove misleading to some inquirers. While "official" science may indeed have materialistic assumptions, and religious orthodoxy retain a dogmatic stance, to take no notice of the changes of attitude among many active in these areas might give the impression that Theosophical students are poorly informed.

As with any sort of inquiry, we ought to consider the philosophy of Theosophy as a whole rather than focus on one particular idea or statement, critical or otherwise. *The Secret Doctrine* is subtitled "The Synthesis of Science, Religion, and Philosophy," and this says a great deal about the nature of Theosophy in general. Its teachings were presented to the world by H. P. Blavatsky both to provide a path for those sincerely seeking true knowledge, and to challenge the confining ideas and beliefs of Western man by contrasting them with *a universal system of thought*. When the original works embodying Theosophy were published, materialism (in science) and dogmatism (in religion) were great impediments to the moral, intellectual, and spiritual progress of man. They still are. We should make no mistake about that. As students, then, it would be natural to want to supplant these tendencies in ourselves by trying to live a higher life and by searching for the truth within oneself.

In relation to speaking and writing, we might ask ourselves: How would an H.P.B. deal with today's science and religion? Even an attempt at direct answer to such a question would be presumptuous, since there are a great many things she said in her books that as yet we hardly understand. But of one thing we may be sure: She would not make her comment in terms of phrases

borrowed and somewhat crystalized from what she set down a hundred years ago. Her comment would be fresh, penetrating, and filled with insight, as always. Would that we were capable of just a little of what she could do!

Something of what she said about science and religion may throw light on the background of both her positive and her critical statements about science and religion. In her article, "Is Theosophy a Religion?" she said:

> Theosophy, as repeatedly declared in print and *viva voce* by its members and officers, proceeds on diametrically opposite lines to those which are trodden by the Church; and Theosophy rejects the methods of Science, since her inductive methods can only lead to crass materialism. Yet, *de facto,* Theosophy claims to be both "RELIGION" and "SCIENCE," for theosophy is the essence of both. It is for the sake and love of the two divine abstractions—*i.e.,* theosophical religion and science, that its Society has become the volunteer *scavenger* of both orthodox religion and modern science; as also the relentless Nemesis of those who have degraded the two noble truths to their own ends and purposes, and then divorced each violently from the other, though the two are and *must be one*. . . .
>
> If it is claimed by both Church and Science that each of them pursues the truth and *nothing but the truth*, then either one of them is mistaken, and accepts falsehood for truth, or both. Any other impediment to their reconciliation must be set down as purely *fictitious*. Truth is one, even if sought for or pursued at two different ends. Therefore, Theosophy claims to reconcile the two foes. It premises by saying that the *true* spiritual and primitive Christian religion is, as much as the other great and still older philosophies that preceded it—*the light of Truth*—"the life and the light of men."
>
> But so is the *true* light of Science. Therefore, darkened as the former is now by dogmas examined through glasses smoked with the superstitions artificially produced by the Churhes, this light can hardly penetrate and meet its sister ray in a science, equally as cobwebbed by paradoxes and the materialistic sophistries of the age. The teachings of the two are incompatible, and cannot agree so long as both Religious philosophy and the Science of physical and external (in philosopy, *false*) nature, insist upon the infallibility of their respective "will-o'-the-wisps." The two lights, having their beams of equal length in the matter of false deductions, can but extinguish each other and produce still worse darkness. Yet, they can be reconciled on the condition that both shall clean their houses, one from the human dross

> of the ages, the other from the hideous excrescence of modern materialism and atheism. And as both decline, the most meritorious and best thing to do is precisely what Theosophy alone can and *will* do: *i.e.*, point out to the innocents caught by the glue of the two waylayers—verily two dragons of old, one devouring the intellects, the other the souls of men—that their supposed chasm is but an optical delusion; that, far from being one, it is but an immense garbage mound respectively erected by the two foes, as a fortification against mutual attacks.
>
> Thus, if Theosophy does no more than point out and seriously draw the attention of the world to the fact that the *supposed* disagreement between religion and science is conditioned, on the one hand by the intelligent materialists rightly kicking against absurd human dogmas, and on the other by blind fanatics and interested churchmen who, instead of defending the souls of mankind, fight simply tooth and nail for their personal bread and butter and authority—why, even then, theosophy will prove itself the saviour of mankind.

Much of *The Secret Doctrine* was devoted to extricating from its materialistic background the truths discerned by perceptive scientists, and as much space again was given to the interpretation and explanation of religious symbols, showing the archaic truth which lay behind theological distortions. In this article we have quoted, H.P.B. gave an impression of the scientific and religious status quo of her time. Elsewhere she wrote prophetically of the future, remarking that scientists would revise their views only from evidence in their own work, which would drive them from their materialistic assumptions. (*S.D.* I, 620.) Of religion—or at least the Chirstian religion of the West—she implied (in "Esoteric Character of the Gospels") that it would die out in its present form during the twentieth century.

Some of these tendencies are already in evidence. They have due attention in "On the Lookout" from time to time. Even a leading scientist or two has recently questioned the materialistic grounds of scientific assumption, and it may be fairly said that ideas about the scientfic method are somewhat in flux. (See such books as *Beyond Reductionism* and *Hierarchial Structures,* and the recent *The Nature of Scientific Knowledge.*) It is more difficult to say anything about the transitions in religion, although Jacob Needleman's *The New Religions* gives insight into some of the recent trends. What seems plain, however, is that the conventional orthodoxies are all breaking up, with a consequent strengthening

of Fundamentalism, on the one hand, and a multiplication of exotic cults on the other. Yet, despite all this, there seems a deep sort of recognition of the spirit of true religion in unexpected quarters. It seems evident that a great many people, as yet untouched directly by the Theosophical Movement, are trying to find their way to a faith with both substance and promise. There may be some mushiness, but little bigotry, in some of these trends.

Thus, while it remains true that the outward shell of inherited scientific assumption remains placidly materialistic, and the old denominations, while more flexible perhaps, are merely weakening and losing their followings, there have been radical changes in both the scientific and religious scene during the century since the appearance of *Isis Unveiled*. It should be useful to point these things out, from time to time, so that the epithets, "materialistic science" and "dogmatic religion" may at least occur in a framework of better understanding.

SUFI SAYINGS

The world, O my brother, abideth with no one.

Ask the inhabitants of Hell, they will tell you it is Paradise.

The sons of Adam are limbs of one another, for in their creation they are formed of one substance.

When Fortune bringeth affliction to a single member, not one of the rest remaineth without disturbance.

So long as thou are able, crush not a single heart, for a sigh has power to overturn a world.

Not a word can be said, even in child's play, from which an intelligent person may not gather instruction; but if a hundred chapters of wisdom were read in the hearing of a fool, to his ears it would sound as nothing but child's play.

—SAADI

on the lookout

A Distinguished Historian

Theosophical conceptions of the meaning of human experience and of history obtain entry into the mind of the times by various means. Sometimes they result from the work of imaginative and thoughtful teachers for whom unanswered questions arise, which they then pass on to their students. An example of this is found in the work of Frederick J. Teggart, a professor of history at the University of California (in Berkeley) during the first half of this century. In the *American Scholar* for the Winter of 1978/79, Robert Nisbet recalls his experience as a student in Teggart's classes, describing the way in which he taught, and also the themes of inquiry that he developed, chief among which was the idea of progress and its varied effect on all forms of human enterprise.

> As far as I know [Prof. Nisbet writes] Teggart was the first in this country to build a course, even a curriculum, in some degree around the history of an idea, and he was also among the very first to appreciate fully its real importance and its wide and subtle influence. . . . History, I can hear him now, is not unitary but plural. The world is made up of many histories, many time frames, and it is sheer distortion of these histories to seek to put them all in a West-oriented, basically imaginary progression. . . . It was very probably Teggart's world orientation that the class enjoyed most in the course's content. He moved with such seeming ease and confidence from one civilization to another, past and present, in his highlighting of some problem.

Breadth of Mind

For Teggart, history was world history:

> His comparative approach to world history was a heady experience for most of us, saturated as we were with conventional narratives, chiefly American and English, taught from the third grade onward. For the first time in our lives we were hearing—pertinently and excitingly—about China, India, Babylonia, Israel, Egypt, and many other civilizations of the past. Never, let me emphasize, did he speak in survey or travelogue fashion, which would have been deadly. He never brought up a civilization or culture, a seaport city, a trade route, a mountain pass,

a river valley except as a means of casting light upon some problem.

More than "Coincidence"!

The sort of problems that concerned Teggart opened the way to Theosophical ideas:

> One of the more striking problems he would bring up year after year is that posed by the appearance within a single century of such widely separated founders of religions as Confucius and Lao-tze in China, Mahavira and Buddha in India, Zoroaster in Persia, Ezekiel and the second Isaiah in Israel, Thales in Ionia, and Pythagoras in southern Italy. How, Teggart would ask, his voice rising in dramatic emphasis, are we to confront this astonishing phenomenon? As a true *problem*, warranting the most careful research? Or do we walk away from it as a —and his voice would ascend still higher, all stops pulled— *mere* COINCIDENCE?

Teggart's books, *Theory and Processes of History* and *Rome and China*, are available in editions issued by the University of California Press. His prefaces indicate his devotion to world peace and a historian's contribution to the intelligence that must be part of any attempt to put an end to war.

"No Recipe for Happiness"

A great many Americans, supposing that they understand what the Founding Fathers meant by the expression, speak and write about the "pursuit of happiness" as though it were the basic purpose of human life. Naturally enough, psychologists make "happiness" the target of much research, responding to this widespread interest. An article in the *New York Times* for Jan. 16 reviews a book and the work of various researchers on the subject, pointing out the obscurity of the causes of happiness and suggesting that it may be the result of some as yet unknown chemical! Generalizing, the *Times* writer, Jane E. Brody, says:

> Happiness, the studies show, is less predictable than might be expected. Some people who appear to have very little reason to be happy nonetheless are, and others who have every reason for joy are chronically dissatisfied.
>
> There is clearly no recipe for happiness. Indeed, the findings hint that internal biochemical factors not yet determined, or certain circumstances during the first months of life, or both, may significantly influence an individual's "capacity" for happiness.

It Comes and Goes

While long ages of experience have shown that the only remedy for unhappiness is adopting an objective in life that is more important than being happy, researchers still focus on happiness itself, instead of giving primary attention to such wise alternatives. Yet the investigations reported in the *Times* point in that direction:

> Psychologists have found, for instance, that the attainment of happiness requires a life-long and ever-changing quest. In fact, Dr. [Jonathan] Freedman, the Columbia psychologist, points out in a recently published book, *Happy People*, that people quickly get used to whatever they have, good or bad, and only deviations from the level to which they've adapted produces happiness or unhappiness.
>
> "This explains why people who seem to have everything are not necessarily happy," he wrote. "After a while, they get used to having 'everything,' and only getting more will have a substantial effect on their happiness."
>
> Another factor influencing happiness, the psychologists say, is expectation. Those who get more than they thought they would, tend to be happier than those who achieve what they or others expected them to achieve. And unrealistically high expectations tend to bring disappointment and unhappiness with the reality attained.

"The Net of Delusion"

There seems little distinction here between the equanimity of a person who feels a real purpose in life and the satisfactions which result from acquisition. This is perhaps to be expected from a psychological outlook which remains ignorant of the dual aspect of human nature and the presence in man of a higher ego with goals very different from the passing hopes of the personality. The idea of a "quest," however, might suggest this distinction. Actually, we need no further "research" concerning the folly of indulging one desire after another. While the analysis given above seems accurate enough—as a description of the natural behavior of lower manas—it is far from new. The *Gita* (Chap. 16) long ago showed where this sort of "pursuit" leads:

> Fast-bound by the hundred chords of desire, prone to lust and anger, they seek by injustice and the accumulation of wealth for the gratification of their own lusts and appetites. "This today hath been acquired by me, and that object of my heart I shall obtain; this wealth I have, and that also shall be mine. This foe have I already slain, and others will I forthwith

> vanquish; I am the lord, I am powerful, and I am happy. I am rich and with precedence among men; where is there another like unto me? I shall make sacrifices, give alms, and enjoy." In this manner do those speak who are deluded. Confounded by all manner of desires, entangled in the net of delusion, firmly attached to the gratification of their desires, they descend into hell.

How to "Miss" Happiness

An American historian, Arthur M. Schlesinger, observed in 1943, in an essay on the character of his countrymen, that "The pursuit of happiness" had been "transformed into the happiness of pursuit." He spoke of the acquisitive drive, so celebrated by Americans, but in this was anticipated by some fifty-five years by H.P.B., who in *The Secret Doctrine* remarked that modern man had made of selfishness an "ethical characteristic." Fortunately, a growing number of people, young and old, are recovering from this delusion and are setting for themselves better worlds to conquer. There are today psychologists well aware of the delusion of the pursuit of happiness. The Viennese psychiatrist, Viktor Frankl, says in his most recent book, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning*:

> What is called self-actualization is, and must remain, the unintended effect of self-transcendence; it is ruinous and self-defeating to make it the target of intention. And what is true of self-actualization also holds for identity and happiness. It is the very "pursuit of happiness" that obviates happiness. The more we make it a target, the more widely we miss.

"If We are Not Seeking"

Is, then, happiness some sort of "bad thing" which should be avoided? The common sense of Mr. Judge seems the best answer to such questions. In his comment on the second chapter of the *Bhagavad-Gita*, he said:

> All that can be gotten out of wealth, or beauty, or art, or pleasure, are merely pools of water found along our path as it wanders through the desert of life. If we are not seeking them their appearance gives us intense pleasure, and we are thus able to use them for our good and that of others just so long as the Law leaves them to us; but when that superior power removes them, we must say: "It is just what I in fact desired." Any other course is blindness. All the passing shows of life, whether fraught with disaster or full of fame and glory, are teachers; he who neglects them, neglects opportunities which seldom the gods repeat. And the only way to learn from them

is through the heart's resignation; for when we become in heart completely poor, we at once are the treasurers and disbursers of enormous riches.

"Black Holes"

There is much preoccupation, these days, with the processes and mystery of death, so it is perhaps natural that astronomers and cosmologists should reveal an increasing interest in what are termed "black holes," believed to be formed by the death and subsequent collapse of a very massive star. *Time* for Sept. 4, 1978, reported on current theory, suggesting a connection of black holes with not only the demise but also the origin of the cosmos. The writer said:

> A black hole? The name is highly appropriate. Nothing—not even light—can escape from the black holes, making them invisible. Even more astounding, these bizarre non-objects are in effect celestial vacuum cleaners that voraciously devour everything they meet. They are bottomless pits into which atomic particles, dust and gigantic suns all disappear without a trace. They are rips in the very fabric of time and space, places where long cherished laws of nature simply do not apply. . . . If whole stars can vanish from sight within black holes, literally crushed out of existence, where has their matter gone? To another place and another time? Where did it come from? In searching for answers to the fundamental questions raised by black holes, scientists are fringing on the realm of philosophers and theologians. They are trying to find the meaning of life, of being, of the universe itself.

Matter Dissolves

The suggestion that scientific speculation about the implications of black holes verges on metaphysical inquiry seems accurate enough. But to seek for an explanation beyond mere description would require attention to the occult metaphysics, found in *The Secret Doctrine*. On the subject of the death of worlds, H.P.B. quotes an Indian writer, Vamadeva Modelyar. While the language is very different, taking into account the inner side of manifested reality, the collapse of all matter is a part of the picture:

> "Life and motion lose their force, planets can hardly gravitate in space; they are extinguished one by one, like a lamp which the hand of chokra (servant) neglects to replenish. Sourya (the Śun) flickers and goes out, matter falls into dissolution (pralaya), and Brahmâ merges back into Dayus, the Unrevealed God, and, his task being accomplished, he falls asleep."

Rebirth of Worlds

In this old account, the persisting subjective reality behind the material universe is not neglected:

> "And now again he re-enters into the Golden Egg of His Thought, the germs of all that exist, as the divine Manu tells us. During his peaceful rest, the animated beings, endowed with the principles of action, cease their functions, and all feeling (manas) becomes dormant. When they are all absorbed in the SUPREME SOUL, this Soul of all the beings sleeps in complete repose till the day when it resumes its form, and awakes again from its primitive darkness." (*S.D.* I, 376-77.)

The idea of the rebirth of suns comes into the *Time* report:

> Indeed, black holes seem to have universal implications, for the gravitational collapse of stars suggests the universe, too, can begin falling back in on itself. If that happens, its billions of galaxies will eventually crush together and could form a super black hole. And what then? Nothing? Or would a new process of creation somehow begin?

"Holes in Laya"?

On this possibility *Time* quotes a British physicist, Stephen Hawking, who points out that black holes leak subatomic particles and high energy gamma rays back into the universe, and the avenues of this re-emergence of matter into space have been named "White Holes." Are these points of disappearance and reappearance of matter—black and white holes—physical evidence of some sort of the laya centers spoken of by H.P.B.? "No world," she says (*S.D.* I, 140), as no heavenly body, could be constructed on the objective plane, had not the elements sufficiently differentiated already from their primeval Ilus, resting in laya." Other statements also apply:

> *The great Breath digs through Space seven holes into Laya to cause them to circumgyrate during Manvantara* (I, 147). . . . The seven *Layu* centres are the seven Zero points, using the term Zero in the same sense that Chemists do, to indicate a point at which, in Esotericism, the scale of reckoning of differentiation begins. From the Centres . . . begins the differentiation of the elements which enter into the constitution of our Solar System. (I, 138-39.)

"Fierce Radiancy"

How does the collapse of a star take place? Astronomers, *Time* notes, call the death of a star catastrophic gravitational collapse, in which most of the matter involved falls toward the solar center.

"If the conditions are right," the account continues, "the matter crushes together with such enormous force that it literally compresses itself out of existence." Whatever the connection of black holes—which sound, perhaps misleadingly, like the celestial "graves" of stars or even galaxies—with such phenomena as quasars and novas or supernovas, representing a sudden brightness in the sky, and lasting but months, a brief remark by H.P.B. on Keely's ideas (*Lucifer* IV, 139) should be of interest:

> The Sun we see is "an inert mass" of adumbrations, the unreal phantom of the real Sun, which, but for this *veil*, would consume our earth, and probably all the planets with its fierce radiancy. If it has been calculated of that "solar phantom" we see, that the heat emitted by it in a single second would be enough "to melt a shell of ice covering the entire surface of the earth to a depth of one mile 1,457 yards," what would be the intensity of sunlight if the invisible sun were suddenly unveiled? And this is what will happen, the Occult Doctrine teaches, when the hour of Pralaya strikes—after which the Sun himself will be disrupted.

'Useless Suffering" Protested

An article on medical experiments using animals, in the Sunday *New York Times Magazine* (Dec. 31, 1978), by Patricia Curtis, author of a book on animal rights, brings to the fore a painful subject seldom explored by the conventional press. We learn at the outset that today "American researchers sacrifice approximately 64 million animals annually." These include 400,000 dogs, 200,000 cats, 33,000 apes and monkeys, thousands of horses, ponies, calves, sheep, goats and pigs, and millions of rabbits, hamsters, guinea pigs, birds, rats and mice. While the writer does not challenge the importance of vivisection to medical knowledge, she maintains that there is much unnecessary experiment and that the researchers seem to think they have the right to "use animals in almost any way they see fit." The article summarizes the protests of various humane organizations against such useless suffering of animals, noting that some scientists are "beginning to ask themselves some hard ethical questions." The article is worth reading for recent evidence of this spirit among scientists, suggesting that some day, perhaps, these investigators will realize how they may have been blinded by misleading conclusions obtained through vivisection. Surely there are better ways to find out how organisms work than torturing or cutting up living creatures!

Scientific Reasoning

The *Times* writer draws on *Alternatives to Animal Experiments*, by Dr. D. H. Smith, who hopes that the number of laboratory animals can be reduced by using other methods of research, but does not expect them to be eliminated. Yet such books raise many questions and contribute strength to the growing feeling that vivisection *ought* to be entirely eliminated. A closing passage in the *Times* article is of particular interest:

> Richard Ryder calls animal experimenters to task for trying to have it both ways: Researchers defend their work scientifically on the basis of the *similarities* between human beings and animals, but defend it morally on the basis of the *differences*. . . . Dr. Ryder asks, "If we were to be discovered by some more intelligent creatures in the universe, would they be justified in experimenting on us?"

The Duty of Humans

Interestingly, major support of the British movement for reform in Animal Experiment is given by the Lord Dowding Fund for Humane Research, devoted to developing experimental substitutes for animals. Lord Dowding, who died several years ago, will be remembered as the commander of the British Air Force during World War II. He was a firm believer in reincarnation and based his opposition to vivisection on the idea that humans ought to help the lower forms of life along in their evolution, "not to retard their development by cruel exploitation of their helplessness." Here is evidence of the civilizing effect of belief in reincarnation, and much hope for the future is sustained by the increasing spread of this idea. It is basically immoral, Lord Dowding declared, "to do evil in order that good may come—even if it were proved that mankind benefits from the suffering inflicted on animals."

How Birds Reach Home

The wonders of nature keep on producing intriguing evidence of the astral realm, obliging scientists to admit how little they know. Reviewing a new book, *Animal Migration, Navigation and Homing*, by William T. Keeton and Timothy Larkin, a writer in the *New York Times* (Dec. 26, 1978) notes the discovery by the authors that pigeons guide themselves in homing flight by their relationship to the moon, and are able to do this even in broad daylight! It was thought puzzling that at first, in a long flight, the

pigeons would go off course. In every case, however, corrections were made and they found their way. The *Times* report on these researches concludes:

> At first, scientists found no reason for the birds' navigational aberrations, but after examining many possible correlations, they found that the pigeons' course varied with the changing positions of the moon.
>
> The behavior patterns of the homing pigeons indicated that the birds might possess some delicate sense with which they could chart the faint gravitational wake of the moon. This seemed like a plausible theory to the experimenters, but they could find little corroborating evidence. Other explanations, such as the presence of a lunar hormonal cycle in the birds, are possible, the scientists said, but are conjectural.

Clues Are Available

> "The difficulty," Mr. Larkin explained, "is that lunar rhythms involve things we don't have a clue to. All along, our work on homing has involved things we can't see, but now these things are becoming increasingly more invisible. We have no idea what a minute change in gravity feels like, for instance. It's like describing color to a blind person."
>
> And how the pigeons' lunar "radar" works, and how it fits into the birds' multifaceted guidance system, are still a mystery to scientists.

This scientist says that there is no "clue" to an understanding of the lunar rhythms which affect birds and other living things, but the clues exist and have been available since 1888 to inquirers willing to look in the right direction. Study of what is said about the moon and the astral light in *The Secret Doctrine* would supply somewhat more than "clues" to biologists ready to consider hidden factors of causation.

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